

HOME SUPPLEMENT THE SUNDAY JOURNAL.

INDIANAPOLIS SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1903

HALIBI, THE ROBIN HOOD OF SYRIA

The Tale of a Christian Avenger Told by New York Syrians

In a little coffee shop in the Syrian quarter of New York the other day a Syrian mother was hushing her baby to sleep. The burden of her lullaby was that Halibi—not Br'er Fox—would catch him if he did not slumber.

"Who is Halibi?" asked an American, who was sitting at the next table. The woman pointed proudly to a photograph on the wall, here reproduced. "That is Halibi," she said. "He sent the picture to his Syrian friends here. He took the cross and the flag from a church, and was photographed with them because he is the bravest and greatest of all the Christian warriors in Syria."

Finding the American interested, other Syrians gathered round and showed him many other pictures of the Christian outlaws of Syria which decorated the walls of the coffee shop, and also a photograph of two Beirut children made orphan by the Turk. They recounted with pride the exploits of their friend Halibi, asserting that when a Christian in Beirut is threatened by his Moslem neighbors he replies:

"It is in your power to plunder me and kill me, but if you do so Halibi will hear of it, and you know what that means."

They do, and nine times out of ten they leave the man alone.

Eelies Halibi, the man whose mere name causes such terror in Syria, is the Robin Hood of the Lebanon, the most famous of the Christian outlaws who dwell among the rugged mountains of that region and wage unceasing war upon the Turk. His friends say that he has slain at least a hundred Mohammedans in single combat, and the Christians of Beirut regard him as their avenging angel and their greatest protector.

Fifteen years ago, when he was little more than a boy, he lived with a Syrian Christian in Mazah, a Christian village near Beirut. They kept a coffee shop there, and were quiet citizens, who asked for nothing better than to be allowed to live in peace.

One day a mob of fanatical Moslems, aided by Turkish soldiers, attacked the village. Men, women and children were alike ruthlessly slaughtered. Halibi and his comrade cut their way through the horde of yelling fanatics and escaped to the mountains of Lebanon, leaving several of their enemies dead behind them.

They were outlawed by the Turkish authorities. Like David, they "abode in the wilderness in strongholds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph."

Soon they became famous. Month after month, year after year, Turkish soldiers searched the mountains for them, in vain. Again and again the outlaws seemed to be surrounded and doomed to capture or death, but they always managed to slip through their pursuers like eels, leaving a trail of



EELIES HALIBI, CHRISTIAN OUTLAW



ONE OF HALIBI'S PURSUERS

oppresses or murders a Christian, or maltreats a Christian woman, Halibi is told of it, and sooner or later he wreaks vengeance.

The entire Christian population of Beirut and vicinity are at his service, to act as his spies, send him money and food, and warn him of the movements of the soldiers sent against him. Yet he never trusts anybody absolutely. Nobody, even among his closest friends, knows where he sleeps and lives.

Some time ago Halibi's New York friends bought him several fine guns and revolvers. They were sent in care of a Christian at Beirut. The Turkish customs officers opened the package, "tumbled to the game," and, naturally, confiscated the weapons.

Halibi was indignant when he heard the news. "Unless you give up those guns at once," he wrote to the head of the customs, "I will come into Beirut some night and kill you." The guns were given up.



MADE ORPHANS BY THE TURK

dead and dying Moslems. One night a Turkish captain of gendarmes was complacently smoking by his campfire on the mountain side. In half an hour he expected to capture the famous outlaws.

The officer called out a sharp order to his men to saddle their horses and get ready. Even as he did so, a dark figure leaped out of the darkness into the light of the campfire. It was Halibi. With a shout of triumph, he flung himself upon the hated Turk and plunged his dagger into his breast to the hilt. Then, before the astonished soldiers could move hand or foot, he sped away into the darkness.

The young outlaw performed many such deeds as he grew into manhood in the wild, free life of the mountains. He became a giant in stature and a

Hercules in strength. His skill in swordsmanship, his cunning, and the deadly accuracy of his aim made him feared by even the bravest of the Turkish soldiers.

After some years Halibi's comrade was smuggled out of the country by Christian friends and came to New York, where he now lives. But Halibi chose to stay in Syria and feed full his ancient grudge against the Turk. He still lives there in the mountains, and his fame is greater than ever.

Every now and then a few dead or dying Mohammedans are found in the streets of Beirut some dark night. They have been shot or stabbed a few moments before, and yet there is no trace of their slayer. Nobody doubts who he is. Sometimes the dying victim manages to gasp, "Halibi!" but

even that is unnecessary.

Halibi has killed over sixty Moslems during these night incursions into Beirut. He is still in the business. The Turkish authorities have never been able to catch him, although he has frequently given them notice of his intentions. He will write to them and say that he is coming into the city during a certain week to kill certain men, whom he names. Hundreds of soldiers may be on the watch for him, and the men whom he has sentenced to death may be guarded night and day, but somehow or other Halibi will manage to carry out his purpose within the appointed time.

He does not kill Mohammedans indiscriminately. He picks his men, and murders only those whom he deems to be deserving of death. If a Moslem



ABO RAFOOL, CHRISTIAN PATRIOT